

AN AESTHETIC INVESTMENT THAT PAYS REAL DIVIDENDS

Architectural Beauty Increases Rental Returns in Buildings and Thus Has Direct Influence on Property Values, Declares Authority on Design --- Insures Against Reduction of Income as Structures Grow Old

By LEON V. SOLOV,
Treasurer of the New York Architectural League.

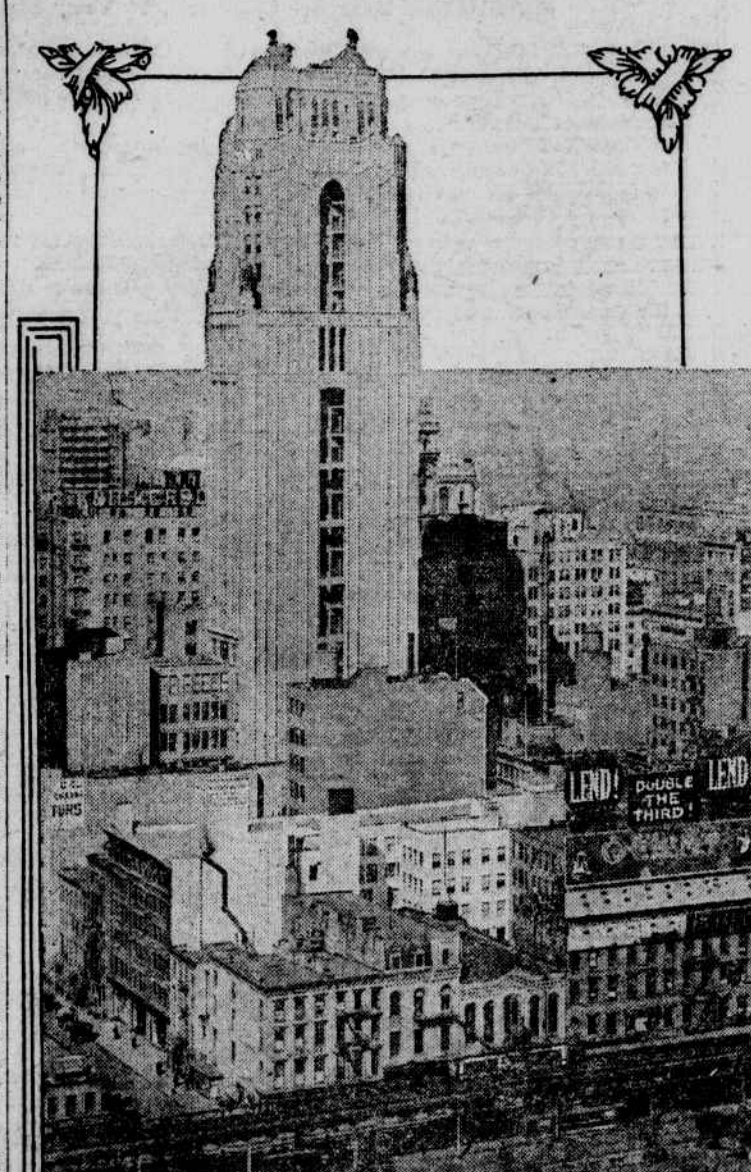
When visual impressions are capable of exerting a direct influence upon material issues the stimulation of these impressions is a subject worthy of consideration. In building projects for the erection of high grade business premises the public is due to their greater or lesser architectural pretension. This impresses the fact upon us that concentration on the subject of treatment in design is a profitable investment of thought.

With the rapid architectural development of American cities their inhabitants have acquired an automatic habit of unconscious appraisal of the ethical advantages which tenants might enjoy through occupancy of a structure of a certain quality. Deductions formulate themselves from a visual impression as to whether the tenants are likely to pursue exclusive or heterogeneous vocations and whether the businesses housed are rated first or second class. These deductions are no longer influenced as they were some years ago, by ostentatious expenditure in costly building material and elaborate fixtures; it is purely a question of architectural treatment. Independent of obvious advantages, such as, for example, as costly locations, those who invest in structural ventures of this character have acquired a very general conviction that buildings possessing certain architectural qualities have a capacity to produce impressions of a complex and reflex nature, which are a decided enhancement of the investment; also that when these qualities are minimized a corresponding depreciation in results may be expected, regardless of the structural quality of the building or the material used.

Architecture, meaning beauty in structure, has always performed a powerful ethical function in the histories of civilization, precisely through its capacity of imaginative stimulation in mentalities of all cultures. It stands apart from its sister arts of painting and sculpture in its ability to create mental reactions of certain kinds, in the minds of those who are devoid of the artistic sense, the two other arts demanding primarily the gift of aesthetic perception for their appreciation and enjoyment. The mental reactions which it stimulates in the untrained mind do not necessarily operate in the aesthetic sphere; they result in definite conclusions, bearing upon those attributes which epitomize the characteristics of various human activities and institutions.

Modern commercial enterprise has evolved novel methods of procedure, whereby the action and reaction of indirect and abstract factors are carefully analyzed, estimated and utilized. We have cultivated the practice of tracing the result to the remotest cause, and of dissecting circumstances into their contributory elements. A newborn confidence in our capacity to discern such things leads us frequently to accept the symbol of success or prosperity in cases in which the preceding generation would have recognized only financial data as the initial step to commercial relations. In matters of minor importance it amuses us to assume a hypothesis from an observation of a condition, as being less tedious than the usual investigation. Our impulsive habit of deduction tends to identify dignified business premises with financial stability despite the fact that we are all aware that the acumen of the shrewdest operator causes him to be fastidious on the subject of scenic setting.

It would be superfluous to enumerate the manners in which architecture was advantageously utilized as the creator of impressions in former ages. By its character in design the fortress acquired an air of impenetrability, which bred discouragement in the hearts of its attackers; in the religious edifices of all times it aided that desirable detachment from mundane matters. By the aid of magnificent structural effects rulers maintained a prestige which in the majority of cases their personalities would neither gain nor maintain. To-day these psychic properties in structure are being developed on less simple lines to meet the variety and individuality of our varied requirements. Architectural design still remains a powerful medium for national and theistic propaganda, but in its new capacity it has become a



THIS VIEW OF THE BUSH TERMINAL BUILDING AT 132 WEST 42ND ST., DESIGNED BY HELMLE AND CORBETT AFFORDS A STUDY IN STRUCTURAL CONTRASTS

major adjunct to modern salesmanship. In the most modern sense of the term salesmanship is no longer confined to the mere act of effecting a commercial transaction. It now stands for those policies, tactics or methods which we devise through our intuition of human impulses and our observation of circumstances in order that a predetermined commercial objective be attained. Subtle measures must necessarily be employed where results are to be reached through psychological influences; suggestion is more effective than verbal statement, which is likely to create a qualifying or antagonistic attitude by its obvious purpose to influence. For this reason some auxiliary psychic agency is needed, operating outside the sphere of direct business activities, to influence advantageous and essential conclusions, which might be reached by the direct presentation of convincing facts. Architectural skill and ingenuity are powerful aids in supplying the position of vantage from which those operations may be most beneficially conducted.

Recognizing this advantage the prospective realty investor is confronted with the difficulty of selecting his architect wisely, for him in New York, a reduced to a minimum, owing to the high average of attainment in this profession and the rapidly increasing number of excellently designed business buildings for reference. In this step he has to consider very seriously the advertising value of any particular archi-

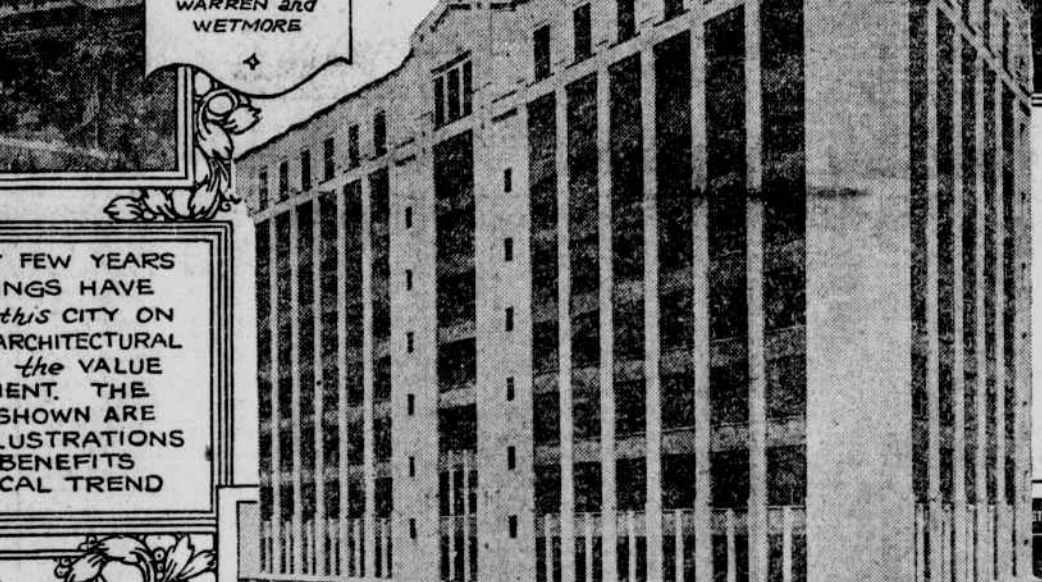
TECT'S work, or, in other words, its capacity for attracting favorable attention. Unfortunately where judgment is required from laymen in a subject which is essentially aesthetic conscious inexperience often trenches itself behind personal predilections or instinct and is fortified by homestead arguments, which are quite apart from those considerations where with merit is measured by efficient criticism. Were a business man to choose a horse for racing after the same fashion that he frequently chooses his architects, and put up a corresponding sum to back his judgment, his relatives would be justified in making applications for his commitment to a sanatorium.

In addition to advertising value the question of depreciation in the value of the investment enters largely into the problem of architectural treatment. Good architecture is an insurance against loss of favor with the renting public through the passing of vogue; beauty and dignity in structure excite an attraction which maintains the demand for space in a building long after this has ceased to contemporize built with equal outlay but less taste.

Much has been heard of the inclusion of architectural service in the cost of structure, a plan which is advantageous to the owner, but full of dangers in others. The following incident occurred recently. An architect was asked by a group of business men to make a tentative plan and estimate



STRAUS BUILDING AT THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF 5TH AVENUE AND 46TH ST., DESIGNED BY WARREN AND WETMORE



CONCRETE FACTORY BUILT BY THE TURNER CONSTRUCTION CO. ON THE EAST SIDE OF VARICK ST BETWEEN GRAND AND WATT STREETS. HELMLE AND CORBETT ARCHITECTS

for an office building. This was rousingly laid out and submitted, but he was informed at the following meeting that a construction firm had offered to provide plans without fee if it were awarded the contract, and that, as the commission involved a substantial sum, the investors did not feel justified in ignoring such an advantage. The architect pointed out that the fee included supervision, with the responsibility of enforcing the terms of the specification. "If, for instance," he remarked, "I find that girders are being erected of a lesser dimension than was specified, or inferior material or fixtures used, I am there to protect your interests by condemning them. But if an employee of the interested parties is also the supervisor of your interests, what chance have you of knowing that you get what you pay for?"

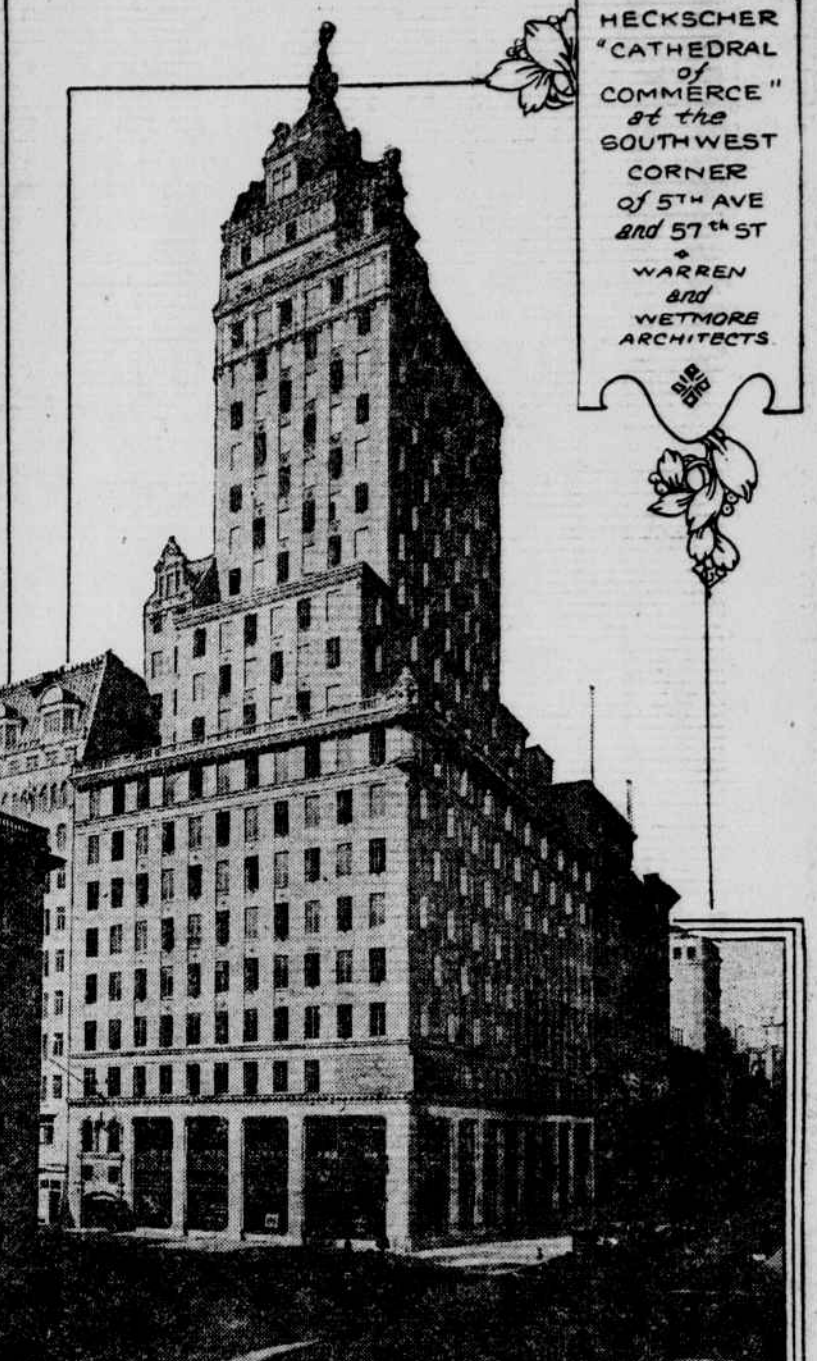
It was satisfactory to hear that the architect got the work. To argue values is necessarily a vague proceeding, particularly when the values in question are not intrinsic and exist only in proportion to the perception of each individual, as is the case in architectural design. Nevertheless, it is reassuring to find that the advantages of good design are recognized, even if its component elements are generally unknown.

New Setting for Jewels

Two leasing events of the past week or so in which big and influential wholesale and retail jewelry concerns of the Maiden Lane district have taken large units of space in the Fifth Avenue and Grand Central Terminal zones emphasize the slow but sure trend of the jewelry trade from its long established downtown field to the new uptown business, financial and shopping district in the vicinity of Forty-second street. A few days ago L. Heller & Sons rented the tenth floor in Max M. Nathan's new Columbia Trust Company Building at the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth street, through Roy Scherick and the American Watch Company of Maiden Lane leased the tenth floor in the Banks Building, at 58 to 64 West Forty-fifth street through Frederick Fox & Co. Representatives of both these concerns agree in their opinions that the Fifth Avenue shopping sector is the logical future location of the jewelry trade.

"This movement up town," said L. Heller of L. Heller & Sons, "would have come about in the course of time through natural causes, but it is now being hastened by the relentless inroads which the banking and insurance interests have been making on the jewelry habitat during the last two or three years. The climax was capped when the Federal Reserve Bank began to raise the old buildings on the site of their new bank home on Nassau street between Liberty and Maiden lane. After that there not only was no room for expansion in the Nassau street or Maiden lane buildings but dozens of small firms were virtually compelled to move up town."

The logical place for the jewelry business, wholesale or retail, is in proximity to the hotels and railroad terminals, especially the hotels. The Maiden Lane district has remained almost unbroken for years through traditional sentiment, although the hotels long ago went above Twenty-third



HECKSCHLER "CATHEDRAL OF COMMERCE" AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF 5TH AVE AND 57TH ST. WARREN AND WETMORE ARCHITECTS

\$1,500,000 Trade Involves Madison Ave. Apartment

The eleven story apartment house, 100x100, at the northeast corner of Madison Avenue and Sixty-sixth street, has been sold by L. Randolph and Everett Jacobs, operators, to Max Loewenthal, in part payment Mr. Loewenthal gives his big estate known as Rockmoor, in Northdale, about six miles above White Plains, which the Messrs. Jacobs have leased for the past season. N. A. Berwin & Co. were the brokers in the deal.

The apartment house includes among its tenants Mrs. Jane L. Armour, Golet Gallatin, Harrison Williams, Leonard M. Thomas and Walcott G. Lane. It returns an annual rental of more than \$150,000. The entire transaction involves more than \$1,500,000, Milton Dammann, attorney, represented Mr. Loewenthal and Stoddard & Mark represented Messrs. Jacobs. The brokers will continue to act as agents for the property.

The Rockmoor estate contains a handsomely furnished twenty-two room residence, with outbuildings and garage and greenhouse. The property comprises 107 acres on which there is a ten acre lake. Messrs. Jacobs will use the estate as a permanent summer residence.

Big Hoe Estate Lease Reported.

It was reported yesterday that the Hoe estate is leasing its holdings at the southeast corner of Broadway and Thirty-seventh street to Harry Fischel, the builder, who expects eventually to erect a twenty story office building there. The lease is for twenty-one years, with several renewals for the same period, and is said to carry an option for purchase at \$1,400,000. The rental for the first term is reported to be about \$90,000 net annually.

The site takes in 1864 to 1870 Broadway, 102, 104 and 106 West Thirty-seventh street and 629 Sixth avenue, and is now improved with eight four and two story buildings. It is valued by the city for taxation purposes at \$1,250,000, of which \$1,195,000 represents value. The property has a frontage of 105.8 feet on Broadway, 173 feet on West Thirty-seventh street and 23.6 feet on Sixth avenue.

Business Buildings Sold.

Cross & Brown Company sold for the Central Union Trust Company, trustees for the estate of A. D. Julliard, to the H. W. G. Realty Corporation, the twelve story building, 75x32, at 32-36 West Eighteenth street. The attorneys in the transaction were May Preider, representing the purchaser, and Larkin, Rathbone & Perry, representing the seller.

John Peters sold for the Lockwood Construction Company to an investor 541 East Fourteenth street, a five story business building, 25.6x103.3.

Apartment and Flat Sales.

Simon Myers and William Goldstone have sold through James E. Barry the Vernon, a seven story elevator apartment house, 50x125, at 356 West Seventy-first street, valued at \$140,000 and returning an annual rental of approximately \$25,000. The new owner is an investor who recently purchased the Santa Monica apartments abutting Seventieth street, acquiring the latter in the name of the Elliman Realty Corporation.

Daniel H. Jackson and Thomas S. Shorten sold to the 752 West End Avenue Corporation, Harry Josephson, president, a five story apartment house at that address, containing ten apartments of seven rooms, and renting at \$15,500 per annum. This property was held at \$100,000.

Suburban Transactions.

Howard Lehman, attorney, member of the firm of Leventritt & Cook, Nathan L. Gould,

Private Restrictions Don't Always Protect

EDWARD M. BASSETT.

Sometimes private restrictions do not protect. A remarkable instance of this occurred in Brooklyn recently. About twenty-five years ago a developer owned both sides of a promising Flatbush street or three blocks. It was then sparsely settled but in the line of good development. He printed circulars containing maps and described the property as highly restricted for one family detached houses. Home builders took deeds from him containing restrictions against everything but high class one family detached houses and built according to the restrictions, considering that they were well protected. "No corner lots, however, were held at a higher price and did not sell so readily. After a time, however, the neighborhood being built up with private homes, the corner lots became highly eligible for apartments, and the developer conveyed them without restrictions.

The home builders had made a mistake not to require of the developer to put similar restrictions on his un sold land, but like many others they had assumed that the entire locality would be restricted. Apartment houses went up rapidly on the corners, entirely altering the character of the neighborhood. All the home owners were injured. One of them, the widow of the original builder, moved her house away just in time to escape having its removal blocked by new apartment houses. She then had a vacant plot 100x120, restricted, however, to a one family detached house.

On the ground that the character of the neighborhood had changed, she appealed to the courts for a decree removing the restrictions and placing her land on an equality with the two adjoining corners covered by apartment houses.

A party interested in one of the apartment houses resisted her application on the ground that the original developer had imposed one family detached house restrictions on her land in order that future apartment houses on the corners might have an abundance of light and air. The court of first resort agreed with this objection and was sustained by the Appellate Court.

In that case the restrictions were perpetual. If they had been for twenty or twenty-five years the owners of some of the corners would have postponed building until the restrictions expired, when they would have put up apartment houses. Frequently when restrictions are about to expire home owners will allow their houses to run down in order to sell their land for apartments afterward. Private restrictions were never used to any great extent to prevent families in business districts or tenement houses in block house districts. As a rule, their usefulness was confined to private residential development and their effect was temporary only.

Since New York adopted the zoning resolution property owners do not feel the need of private restrictions so much as before. The zoning is both more permanent and more elastic. It covers the entire city and protects against altered by the parties or by the courts. The protection of zoning, however, being based on the police power, can be easily changed in proper cases by the city itself. Where, however, owners of 20 per cent of the frontage affected protest against the change, the unanimous vote of the city legislature is required. This makes an assurance of permanency.

PUBLISHERS FASCINATING BOOK ON SMALL HOMES

Kenneth Dalzell Presents Collection of Houses.

Artistic makeup, good typographical work and the small of printer's ink may account to a certain extent for the fascination of "Dalzell's Homes of Moderate Size," which comes fresh from the press. But they make up at best a very small part of the allurements which compare with the inspiration which one never fails to derive from well designed houses that fit the small family and the none too robust purse.

The book is arranged and edited by Edward F. Hammel, an architect, and is in effect a compilation of photographs and floor plans of houses designed by Kenneth W. Dalzell of Maplewood, N. J., whose structural creations have done much to beautify the countryside throughout the Oranges. The houses shown follow the Colonial, Italian and English architectural styles and are grouped accordingly. It is explained in the foreword that they are selected for their artistic merit and their adaptability to the needs of the average American family.

The preface, written by Mr. Dalzell, deals with the functions of the architect and touches on some of the misunderstandings that arise between the architect and his client. It also deplores the fact that too frequently suburban homes are built by the person who picks out a ready made floor plan and a discordant exterior design and then hires a local carpenter contractor to weld them together.